

# Recruitment Diversity

*Identifying and developing an applicant pool*

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## **Introduction**

### Focus of the Project

AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps\*Vista, the domestic Peace Corps, is having a major impact on communities around this country by providing the opportunity for individuals to solve community problems through intensive results – driven service. Many of these projects are not operating at full capacity with the number of Corps members approved in their proposal application, and successful recruitment of Corps members has a direct impact on the organization's capacity to meet its goals. Most, if not all, of these projects are ethnically representative of the communities in which they are located. However, we know that the broader community in which we live and work oftentimes is more diverse than where many of the programs are located. Therefore, it is not only important to develop sound recruitment strategies to identify individuals from local communities, but to include diversity in those plans by reaching beyond the boundaries of local projects. In this year's budget request to Congress, President Clinton is seeking funding to increase AmeriCorp's participation to 69,000 by the year 2000. In addition, he has proposed a goal of 100,000 annual participants in the Corps by 2002. Major growth in AmeriCorps will require more sophisticated recruitment tools and strategies, and program leaders must become more creative in developing diversity within the Corps.

This research project focused primarily on the recruitment within the state of Florida assessing demographics of Corps members, current trends, strategies and reasons or motivations that may attract AmeriCorps participants. The study further sought to review recruitment efforts where they were most productive in attracting a diverse group of AmeriCorps and Americorps\* Vista participants. Florida is the fourth largest state in the nation with a population over 14.5 million people. Between 1990–1997 the Census Bureau reported significant changes in the state's demographics. Florida ranked third nationally in increased White population, first in increased Black population, third in increased Hispanic population and fifth in the increase of its Asian population. This growth in ethnic diversity makes the state of Florida an ideal site to focus on increased diversity within the family of AmeriCorps programs. This study recognizes that diversity is incomplete without the inclusiveness of people with disabilities and others with ideas and beliefs different from our own. Promoting diversity is essential if we hope to serve the needs of our democratic society.

## **Project Background**

### Review of Related Research

A variety of data is readily available on recruitment in general. However, data is limited on the specifics of recruiting for AmeriCorps. Two recent studies by the Corporation for National Service, Practical Application: Strategies for Supporting a Diverse Corps and a

Study of Race, Class, and Ethnicity, are two excellent reports supporting the development of a diverse Corps. Rick Berry a 1997-1998 National Service Fellow studied improving diversity and representation within AmeriCorps programs. The study sought to identify issues as to why some segments of our society are less involved in service than others. Two 1998-1999 National Services Fellows research projects are directly related to the goals and outcome of this study. Stephanie Blackman developed a guide on recruiting male volunteers in which she suggested strategies for attracting male volunteers to social services programs. Lenore Parker in her research on engaging young people as volunteers identifies barriers and strategies associated with engaging them in service.

Reviewing studies on diversity, Morrison (1992) cited five major steps involved in diversifying an organization. The first is to identify the diversity problems within the organization. The second is strengthening top management's commitment by getting them involved in diversity efforts. Thirdly, select practices that fit the organization's needs and problems and develop a balanced diversity strategy. The fourth step is to measure or evaluate the results of the diversity efforts. The final step is to establish a process that ensures ongoing successful diversity efforts. Johnson (1995) suggested the following could help organizations ensure that their valuing and managing diversity efforts will make a lasting difference for the people and the organization. First, assess organizational readiness and need before beginning; think and plan long-term; align diversity efforts with strategic objectives; integrate diversity efforts with other large scale and strategic goals; and measure performance results against program/process objectives.

Reviewing studies on motivational factors as to why people volunteer to serve, Hamilton and Genzel (1987) studied the "Effects of Volunteer Experience in Adolescent's Social Development." Results indicated that girls in community service projects gained a more positive attitude than boys. Ninety (90) percent of the participants indicated the likelihood of continued volunteer work. Nearly all volunteers reported gains in skills and knowledge.

Robert C. Serow (1990) in his study entitled "Students as Volunteers: Personal Competence, Social Diversity and Participation in Community Service," examined the contemporary community service movement by using as a theoretical framework recent work on personal competence and voluntary pro-social action. Findings indicate the relative importance of personal aim is above social concern.

Bender (1986) conducted two studies on the motivation of young volunteers. The first study explored the motivation of three hundred students at a large midwestern university. Students involved in community service, more than other students, valued meeting societal obligations in the form of service to others, lessening their own independence.

Thompson's (1979) study showed that attitudes regarding the Peace Corps among Black seniors and graduate students at Harvard University have become more positive. Former Black volunteers reported that benefits in the form of personal and professional development outweighed the cost of Peace Corps volunteer services.



Thippayanuruksakul's (1989) study showed that the primary motivation for volunteering was to help other people. The leading motivator for student volunteering was achievement. In terms of benefits of volunteering, the respondents "strongly agreed" that their volunteering experiences enabled them to work well with others, and helped them to become more self-motivated to learn, participate, and achieve.

## **Methodology**

The design employed for the purpose of gathering data for this study was a descriptive research design. The method used in the collection of data for this study was the distribution and collection of questionnaires completed by current AmeriCorps, AmeriCorps\* Vista participants, AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps\* Vista project coordinators, and high school students. The questionnaires were designed to assess the reason and motivation that compel an individual to participate in AmeriCorps; to identify strategies for recruiting a diverse Corps and to ascertain the knowledge level of high school students about AmeriCorps. Demographic data was collected on Corps participants and high school students. (Demographic data was also reviewed on the 1996 and 1997 AmeriCorp participants.) The Corps member's survey was piloted on seventy-eight AmeriCorps participants from the Athletes in Service Program in November 1998. The administrative survey was designed in collaboration with eight (8) project coordinators, which included focus group discussion on the topics. Four hundred thirty (430) Corps members participated in the study, one hundred eighty-two (182) high school students and thirty four (34) AmeriCorps, and AmeriCorps\* Vista coordinators.

## **Definition of Terms**

For the purpose of this study the following definitions will be used:

**Recruitment:** the process of identifying, screening, selecting and contracting applicants as AmeriCorps and Americorps\*Vista members.

**Diversity:** the meaning to diversity fluctuates because the concept is still evolving. Multicultural is the principal concept that involves increasing the consciousness and appreciation of differences associated with heritage, characteristics, and values of many different groups, as well as respecting the uniqueness of the individual. However, before we achieve full diversity we must first achieve gender and ethnic diversity (Morrison). Creating a diverse Corps is paramount; however, we should not conceive diversity without inclusiveness. By this, we mean having a diverse population of gender and ethnicity in the project is not enough. We must ensure that all participants are included in every aspect of the project's operation.

## **Results**

The first part of this study assessed basic demographical information. This type of data is important in determining both the scope of diversity within the state of Florida's

population and within AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps\*Vista Programs. The analysis of state data is tabulated on factors such as age, gender, and ethnicity.

The Florida summary report 1997 population estimates by age, sex and race indicated the total population in Florida was approximately 14,653,945 people, of which 69.2% were White, 14.6% Black, 14.4% Hispanic, approximately 2% Asian, and less than 1% Native American. Approximately 24% were less than eighteen years of age, while approximately 19% were over sixty-five (see Table 1).

Table 1  
Population Estimates by Age, Gender, and Ethnicity – Florida

Variable	N=14,653,945 (total)	Percentage
Male	7,123,245	48.6%
Female	7,530,700	51.4%
Under 18 years	3,471,316	23.69%
65 years and over	2,708,804	18.49%
White	10,141,306	69.2%
Black	2,133,985	14.56%
Hispanic	2,105,689	14.38%
Asian	231,078	1.58%
Native American	41,887	.28%

The following information was gathered from the research and analyzed to provide further insight and to identify other factors that bear on both recruitment and diversity within AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps\*Vista.

The profile of Corps members currently participating within the state.

The reasons and motivations that compel individuals to participate in AmeriCorp and AmeriCorps\*Vista.

The identity of the areas by which Corps members learned of AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps\*Vista.

The recruitment strategies that may make AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps\*Vista more attractive and diverse.

The identity of an increased or new applicant pool of Corps members.

The survey data indicated almost three-fourths of the Corps members (430) participating in the survey were female. This pattern is consistent with previous data collected on Corps members in Florida and reflects the National profile. However, it is not consistent with the 1997 Florida statistics that indicate an almost equal male/female population.

Table two (2) highlights male/female participation in the study.

Table 2  
AmeriCorps/AmeriCorps\*Vista Participants Demographics by Gender

Variable	N=430	Percentage
Male	113	26.3%
Female	317	73.7%

The diversity of the female participants in the study indicated more than half is White and approximately one-third are Black (see Table 3).

Table 3  
AmeriCorps/AmeriCorps\*Vista Female Participants

Variable	N=317	Percentage
White	161	50.8%
Native American	2	0.6%
Asian	4	1.3%
Black	103	32.5%
Hispanic	32	10.1%
Other (not identified)	15	4.7%

The data clearly indicates the need to increase male participation (all ethnic groups) in AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps\*Vista programs within the state of Florida. In reviewing male demographics, White male participants in the study represented more than half of the group, followed by Black males as the second highest respondents. Blacks, Hispanics, and Asian males are grossly underrepresented and special attention should be given to increase representation of each (see Table 4).

Table 4  
AmeriCorp/AmeriCorps\*Vista Male Participants

Variable	N=113	Percentage
White	63	55.8%
Native American	0	0%
Asian	2	1.8%
Black	32	28.3%
Hispanic	9	8.0%
Other (not identified)	7	6.2%

Table five (5) is a summary of participants in the study by gender, and ethnicity. Approximately fifty-two percent (52%) were White, and thirty-one percent (31%) Black which made up the majority population in the study.

Table 5  
Summary of AmeriCorps, AmeriCorps\*Vista Participants (Total Group)

Variable	Female	Male	N=430	Percentage
White	161			37.4%
		63		14.7%
Native American	2			0.5%
		0		0%
Asian	4			0.9%
		2		0.5%
Black	103			24.0%
		32		7.4%
Hispanic	32			7.4%
		9		2.1%
Other (not identified)	15			3.5%
		7		1.6%

The age distribution of Corps members in Florida is very well distributed with the category of eighteen to twenty-two representing one-third of the population. However, an analysis of the data from the high school students gives reason to believe the eighteen-year-old represents a very small portion within that category. There is also an attractive market for individuals over fifty. Approximately thirteen percent (13%) of the participants in the study are over fifty. This figure is substantially higher than the national profile (see Table 6).

Table 6  
The Age of AmeriCorps/AmeriCorps\*Vista Study Participants

Variable	N=430	Percentage
Under 18	2	0.5%
18-22	148	34.4%
23-25	52	12.1%
26-30	53	12.3%
31-40	73	17.0%
41-50	45	10.5%
51-60	24	5.6%
61+	30	7.0%
Not identified	3	0.6%

The data indicates approximately thirty percent (30%) of the Corps members are married. A further analysis of the one hundred twenty-seven married respondents indicates there is a proportional relationship across both gender and ethnic categories, of which fifteen (15) are White males, eight (8) Black males, sixty-four (64) White females, seventeen (17) Black female, fourteen (14) Hispanic female, and seven (7) other females. This is

evidence that the married population is attracted to AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps\*Vista and should be aggressively recruited (see Table 7).

Table 7  
Marital Status of AmeriCorps/AmeriCorps\*Vista Participants

Variable	N=430	Percentage
Married	127	29.4%
Not Married	303	70.6%

Individuals with disabilities represented approximately nine percent (9%) of those surveyed. When asked the question, “Have you encountered barriers to accessibility?” twelve (2.85) of the thirty-nine respondents answered “yes” (see Table 8).

Table 8  
Disability Status of AmeriCorps/AmeriCorps\*Vista Participants

Variable	N=430	Percentage
Disabled	39	9.1%
Not Disabled	391	90.9%

In comparing male/female total group educational background, twenty-three percent (23%) of the female participants had no postsecondary experience compared to twenty-eight percent (28%) of the males.

Twenty-one percent (21%) of the females had two-year college experience compared to thirty-two percent (32%) of the males.

Nineteen percent (19%) of the females had four-year college experience compared to twenty-five percent (25%) of the males.

Approximately two and one-half percent (2.5%) of the females had graduate school experience compared to four and one-half percent (4.5%) of the males.

Approximately seven and one-half percent (7.5%) of the females had vocational/technical educational experience compared to ten and one-half percent (10.5%) of the males. (See Table 9)

In comparing Black, White, and Hispanic postsecondary education experience prior to participating in AmeriCorps, seventy-nine percent (79%) of the White males, seventy-five percent (75%) of the Black males, and one hundred percent (100%) of the Hispanic males, sixty-seven percent (67%) of the White females, fifty-three percent (53%) of the Black females, and seventy-eight percent (78%) of the Hispanic females had postsecondary education experience (see Table 9 for a summary of postsecondary experience).

Table 9  
Summary AmeriCorps/AmeriCorps\*Vista Postsecondary Enrollment

Variable	N=419	Percentage
(Education)		
No Prior	117	27.9%
Two Year	134	32.0%
Four Year	105	25.1%
Graduate School	19	4.5%
Vocational/Technical	44	10.5%

In response to the question, “Where did you learn of AmeriCorps Programs?” thirty-nine percent (39%) of the male respondents indicated they learned of it from a friend compared to thirty-five percent (35%) of the females. The second most popular response was in the “other” category, i.e. internet, etc. where twenty-five percent (25%) of the males indicated “other” as to thirty-nine percent (39) of the females. Less than one percent (0.9%) indicated receiving information from high school counselors, 15.8% from the media, 11.4% from a recruiter, 36.4% from a friend, and 35.5% indicated other i.e. internet, etc. (see Table 10).

Table 10  
AmeriCorps/AmeriCorps\*Vista Participants Program Information Source

Variable	N=430	Percentage
High School Counselors	4	0.9%
Media	71	15.8%
Recruiter	51	11.4%
Friend	163	36.4%
Other	159	35.5%

In expressing reasons or motivations for participating in AmeriCorps, belief, convictions or principles, social responsibility and career exploration are the top reasons or motivation for participating. Responding to the categories very important, somewhat important, or not at all important, seventy-seven (77%) of the respondents indicated their personal belief, convictions, or principles were very important. Approximately seventy-one (71%) indicated career exploration, preparation and advancement were very important. Approximately seventy-four (74%) indicated their sense of social responsibility was very important in their choice to participate (see Table 11).

A further comparative analysis of the data by gender and ethnicity seventy-six percent (76%) of the White males indicated their personal belief, conviction or principles were *very important*, as compared to sixty-eight percent (68%) of the Black males and sixty-six percent (66%) of the Hispanic males. Seventy-five percent (75%) of the White females indicated their personal belief, conviction or principles were *very important*, as compared to seventy-five (75%) of the Black females and eighty-nine percent (89%) of

the Hispanic females. Black females were the only respondents that showed an increase in response to very important items on other variables. There were increases in response to career exploration and commitment to protecting the rights of others. Eighty-one (81) respondents in each case indicated these items as very important.

Table 11  
Reasons or Motivations for Participating in AmeriCorps/AmeriCorps\*Vista

Variables	N=430	Percentage
Beliefs, Convictions, etc.	320	77.5%
Career Exploration	301	71.7%
Civic Affairs	208	51.6%
Education Award	276	66.8%
Social Responsibility	313	74.5%
Committed to Protecting Other's Rights	293	69.6%
Interested in Other's Cultures	272	64.6%
Other	75	84.3%

Demographics of AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps\* Vista participants in this study mirrors the national data with the following exceptions.

Female participation is approximately 10% higher than the national.

Hispanic participation is approximately 6% less than national.

The age groups are more equitably distributed in Florida than nationally.

Educational attainment and other demographic variables vary between two and five percentage points (see Table 12 for a comparison of the demographics in this study with AmeriCorps program participants nationally over the past five years).

Table 12  
Comparison of National and State Demographics

National		Florida	
Variable	Percentage	Variable	Percentage
(Gender)		(Gender)	
Female	64%	Female	73.7%
Male	36%	Male	26.3%
(Ethnicity)		(Ethnicity)	
White	48%	White	52.1%
Black	29%	Black	31.4%
Hispanic	16%	Hispanic	9.5%
Asian	3%	Asian	1.4%
Native American	2%	Native American	.5%
Other	2%	Other	5.1%
(Age)		(Age)	
Under 21	31%	Under 21	35%
22-29	46%	23-30	24%
30-45	18%	31-50	28%
Over 45	5%	Over 50	13%
(Educational Attainment)		(Educational Attainment)	
Bachelor/		Bachelor/	
Graduate Degree	34%	Graduate Degree	29.6%
Associate Degree/ Associate Degree/			
Some Post Secondary	39%	Some Post Secondary	42.5%
No Prior Post Secondary		No Prior Post Secondary	
Experience	26%	Experience	27.9%

An additional goal of the research project was to ascertain what recruitment strategies AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps\*Vista participants believed would make participation in the Corps more attractive. Their response is classified into three categories as follows.

**Category I: Perks/Incentives.**

- Provide larger stipends.
- Provide free or reduced housing costs.
- Provide larger educational awards.
- Provide free or reduced transportation costs.

**Category II: Public Relations/Advertising.**

Increase public awareness of AmeriCorps programs for recruitment and community/national awareness.



- Charismatic spokesperson (that AmeriCorps members are more likely to identify with).
- Increases advertising on television.
- Increased advertising on radio.
- Increased advertising on billboards.
- Better website with more detailed information.
- More print media (i.e. posters, brochures, etc.) with more accurate description of AmeriCorps member responsibilities.
- Provide more information to high school guidance counselors so they may effectively promote AmeriCorps to high school students.
- Provide more information to postsecondary educational institution student advisors and career placement centers so they may effectively promote AmeriCorps to postsecondary students.
- Provide more information to civic groups in order to increase awareness of local area AmeriCorps programs.

### **Category III: AmeriCorps Transitional Services.**

Members are looking for a smoother transition into and out of the AmeriCorps program. This ultimately serves to provide an incentive to join AmeriCorps.

- Provide better training as an introduction to AmeriCorps programs. Training should provide a basic overview of AmeriCorps programs on a nationwide basis. Training should also be comprehensive and representative of the types of situations the local area AmeriCorps members are going to encounter with their program.
- Provide job placement and training as a transition from the AmeriCorps program. Job placement should not be limited to the local area. Assistance should be provided on a nationwide scope.

When Corps members were asked, “What recruitment strategies would you recommend that may attract a more diverse Corps?” The following is a summary of their responses.

- Advertise this program to graduating seniors in college; TV and other media.
- Advertise in a culturally diverse area, newspapers, etc.
- More training; information of program.
- Highlight the exposure of the training/skills you can learn; the exposure to how education systems really work; highlight the experiences you will have as a member.
- Diversity in staff/management; making people aware of past participants.
- Recruiting in different high schools or colleges; urban/suburban.
- Recruiting at predominantly ethnic colleges; advertise in predominantly ethnic areas.
- High school visits; visits by former and present Corps members.
- Talk to kids in high schools from all different neighborhoods.
- Utilization of political interest groups; national ethnic organizations.
- Diversify television commercials.

- Targeting males, looking throughout America there is a shortage of men in AmeriCorps.
- To attract a more diverse Corps, greater publicity is needed in more areas of the country; better name recognition similar to the Peace Corps.
- Send representatives from the Corps around to visit and speak with a wide range of diverse areas.
- Show how it could lead to bigger opportunities, i.e. the career path of 4 or 5 successful alums.

Project Coordinators N=34.

Project coordinators indicated recruitment should be a major goal requiring an action plan as part of the proposal. Sixty-eight percent (68%) of those responding said yes, thirty-two percent (32%) said, no, and two percent (2%) no response. They also indicated that recruitment was discussed in their orientation/training sessions. Sixty-nine percent (69%) said yes, and thirty-one percent (31%) said, no. One half of those responding yes indicated *extensively* and the remaining half indicated *very little*. However, there was a lack of consistency varying from very little to extensive recruitment discussions.

Project coordinators identified several challenges they have encountered in the recruitment of AmeriCorps participants.

- Attracting minorities to AmeriCorps, specifically Blacks.
- The economy is so good that young people are attracted to full time employment where they can make more money.
- Potential volunteers felt living stipend was too low.
- Potential volunteers failed to return all of the required information necessary to process applications.
- Many applicants wanted to serve part time at a reduced number of hours.
- Ability to recruit a diverse corps.
- Living allowance too low.
- Start dates do not always coincide with people's need for jobs.
- Finding qualified, quality individuals willing to accept the small stipend.
- The 1700 hours is a big commitment.
- Finding part time people that are students and can juggle a hectic schedule.

Strategies recommended by coordinators in response to challenges:

- Start looking at high school seniors.
- Take a look at the hour requirement.
- Increase living allowance.
- Recruit at local community colleges and high schools.
- Start the recruitment process at an earlier date.
- All programs working with schools should have September start dates.

(To start implementing operations in September means recruiting in June, July and August.)

- Better publicity nationally about the requirements and reward of service with AmeriCorps.
- Raise living allowances.
- Develop and maintain a deeper and more active alternate file so that early dropouts can more easily be replaced.
- Work with other volunteer organizations for suggestions and/or ideas.
- Attend workshops on how to select the quality “candidate”.
- More media publicity.

Strategies recommended by coordinators to attract a more diverse Corps:

- Recruit from area (target neighborhoods) of cities.
- Public service announcements in different languages.
- Have more cultural brochures and posters.
- Develop a speakers bureau with current members to give potential volunteers a personal viewpoint from a member.
- Better inform the community, especially churches and senior service organizations.
- Concentrate on communities that have diversity.

Strategies recommended by coordinators to recruit persons with disabilities:

- Contact local social service agencies who serve disabled populations.
- Seek assistance from the state and national levels to promote AmeriCorps within the disabled community.
- Make contact with job services and vocational rehabilitation organizations.
- Clearly define member service descriptions. These should list the options and avenues available to prospects with disabilities.

High School Students N=182.

In order to identify high school students’ knowledge and interest in AmeriCorps for the purpose of identifying and broadening the potential applicant pool, a survey was administered to one hundred eighty-two (182) students. Because of the research interest in increasing diversity, high schools with a highly diverse population were selected.

A data summary of the participants indicates ninety-nine (99) males, (54.4%), and eighty-three (83) females, (45.6%). This percentage is in reverse to national trends. However, a greater sampling of males may be helpful to this study in determining strategies to increase male participation in AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps\*Vista.

An analysis of respondents by ethnicity indicates the largest population: sixty percent (60%) is Black, twenty-five percent (25%) White, and eight percent (8%) Hispanic (see Table 13).

Table 13

## Ethnicity/Gender High School Respondents

N=182

Variable	Male	Female	Total	Percentage
White	27	18	45	24.73%
Native American	3	0	3	1.65%
Asian	2	2	4	2.20%
Black	52	58	110	60.43%
Hispanic	12	4	16	8.79%
Other	3	1	4	2.20%

The age distribution indicates that forty-seven percent (47%) of the respondents were seventeen (17) and eighteen (18) years old. Forty-four percent (44%) were fifteen- (15)/sixteen (16) years old. Approximately three and one-half percent indicated a disability; however, less than one percent (1%) required accommodations. Ninety-one percent (91%) of students surveyed report plans to continue their education at a 2-year, 4-year, or vocational/technical college. Seventy-nine percent (79%) of students surveyed indicate they will require some type of financial assistance to attend a postsecondary educational institution. Thirty-seven percent (37%) of students surveyed reported that they had heard of AmeriCorps. Thirty-five percent (35%) of students indicating they had heard of AmeriCorps were also aware of the educational award and stipend. Sixty-six percent (66%) of students surveyed responded that they would consider participation in an AmeriCorps program prior to enrolling in a postsecondary educational institution.

### **Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations**

A number of factors were suggested that might negatively impact recruitment efforts such as a booming economy and low unemployment rate. Marketing was identified as one of the most effective ways to enhance both recruitment and diversity. Other suggestions were working with traditional community based organizations, such as fraternities, sororities, churches, and other non-profit organizations

The data indicates a need to increase male participation in AmeriCorps for all ethnic groups, more specifically Blacks, Hispanics and Asians. Additionally, there is a need to educate high school counselors about AmeriCorps. This may be accomplished through several methods, i.e., direct mailings, having project coordinators meet with counselors, or have state commissions provide regional training workshops for counselors.

A transitional training program should be developed so that project coordinators can better assist former Corps members as they leave AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps\* Vista. States should also develop a strategic plan focusing on both recruitment and retention of

Corps members. There is a great need to address items referred to as “logistical issues” i.e., housing problems identified by AmeriCorp\* Vista participants.

The report from the Committee for the Study of National Service, Youths and the Needs of our Nation of the Potomac Institute in the late 1970’s recommended “all young people should be challenged to serve full time for one or more years in meeting the needs of the nation and the world community.” Today, many school systems around the nation require some type of mandatory service as a graduation requirement. The state of Maryland has the broadest requirement for community service by students. A goal of Maryland’s mandatory service requirements is to cultivate a lasting sense of civic responsibility. The seventeen (17), eighteen (18), and nineteen (19) year old age groups are an attractive recruitment market for AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps\*Vista.

A UCLA study of college freshmen that enrolled in the fall of 1998 found that seventy thousand (70,000) in that class took a year off before enrolling in college. Sixty-six percent (66%) of the high school respondents in this study indicated they would consider participating in an AmeriCorps program prior to enrolling in a postsecondary educational institution.

In order to attract this age group, we need to change the culture on how this group perceives community services. Communities across the country are approaching youth services in a variety of ways. One state project in Florida that deserves noting is the ManaTEEN Club in Manatee County. The club was organized in 1995 by Volunteer Services of Manatee County to promote teen volunteerism. The group originally started with twenty-two (22) high school students. There are currently over nine hundred (900) members producing more than a million service hours annually.

### **Junior AmeriCorps**

A major goal of the project was to identify a concept or strategy that may be utilized nationally to enhance both recruitment and diversity of Corps members. The following are reasons for focusing primarily on high school students to achieve this objective.

- An analysis of various demographic factors including age.
- A lack of knowledge about AmeriCorps by high school counselors.
- Two-thirds of the high school respondents indicated they would consider participation in AmeriCorps prior to enrolling in postsecondary education.
- The high percentage of students nationally that does not enroll in postsecondary education immediately after high school graduation

It is recommended that a Junior AmeriCorps program be created in high schools. This is an excellent way to raise awareness and prepare a motivated group of people for service. This program will benefit national service overall and most specifically AmeriCorps state and national and to some degree NCCC. These programs will be similar to the Junior ROTC. The concept for the projects originally was to be educational award only; however, educational award only may be too restrictive in schools or school systems that

want to provide a broader base of support. If pilot projects are established it is recommended that they be educational award only. The service projects that Junior Corps members focus on should be the goals of America's Promise. The structure of the program should allow one-year participation in high school either full or part time. The second year should be in a regular AmeriCorps project.

### **Recruiting**

Beverly Brandes and Rebecca Green suggest that successful recruiting requires knowing answers to the basic questions about the program before beginning the recruitment process. This includes a clear delineation of specific roles and responsibilities. They also point out the importance of knowing the demographics of perspective recruits. What are the general characteristics of those you wish to recruit? Where will you find the population you desire?

#### **Suggested Recruitment and Selection Practices:**

- Target persons in local communities that demonstrate leadership potential and the ability to work as a team.
- Draw Corps members from a diverse population, including community residents who would not otherwise work together.
- Include experienced Corps members in the recruiting and selection process.
- Matching Corps members with partner organization is paramount.
- Recruit members from neighborhoods targeted for community and economic development.

One method of enhancing recruitment is the Demographic Overlay System. This technique was developed more than twenty-five (25) years ago to recruit volunteers for the navy. This system calls for mapping the service area, statistically reviewing activities and targeting recruiting efforts. Jim Bower points out that "if you use this system it is guaranteed to work." He further noted the system could readily assist in preparing strategic recruitment plans for your project.

#### **Recruitment Techniques:**

There are numerous techniques to reach potential Corps members. Thinking through what types of people you are trying to reach should guide your choice of outreach methods.

#### **Examples:**

- Slide Show – 10 minutes or less depicting ways Corps members currently serve.
- Flyers posted in key areas – elevators, stores, gyms, etc.
- Speaker's Bureau – trained Corps members and staff to make presentations.
- Recruitment brochure.

- Contact professional/Community Service Organizations.
- Contact centers or programs for the disabled.
- Contact organizations serving the unemployed.

Existing Corps members should be used to build bridges to their communities. Program coordinators should ask Corps members for advice on how to identify potential applicants, ask them to help make contacts, and recognize them for participating in the recruitment program. Word of mouth is one of the best forms of recruitment. Existing members will often tell friends of their experience.

Factors to consider in developing a strategic plan for recruiting:

- Building on existing strength and improving marketing through targeting, positioning, and segmentation.
- Identify recruitment incentives and develop marketing strategies.
- Make every effort to personalize recruiting.

#### Additional Recommendations:

Program should require Corps members visit high schools, colleges and universities presenting programs about AmeriCorps.

Participate in college and university career fairs.

Create a bonus program to assist with retention.

Use research to focus on recruitment efforts where they are most productive.

Increase male participation of all ethnic groups.

Target 17/18 year olds as a key market.

Continue recruitment of the fifty (50) and above age group.

Focus recruitment on married individuals.

Develop recruitment materials highlighting the education award.

Increase online recruitment.

Review national policy on perks and incentives focusing on how they can be enhanced .

Develop a comprehensive recruitment strategy that can be applied locally, statewide and nationally.

Package and market a transitional service program for AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps\*Vista participants.

Require a recruitment action plan as part of the proposal for funding.

Increase the level of recruitment training for project coordinators.

Provide workshops for high school counselors (find ways to increase this knowledge of AmeriCorps/AmeriCorps\*Vista).

Increase diversity training of coordinators and Corps members with a goal of creating a culture that is actively inclusive.

Market the program in diverse markets.

Develop partnerships with diverse organizations.

Prioritize an ongoing commitment to diversity.

Develop an early identification program.

Develop a long-term view of the recruitment process.

The Corporation for National Service should replicate the study in another state.

Identify and develop at the national level partnerships with four-year colleges and universities to ease transition of Corps members through the admission and enrollment process.

Develop partnerships at the local level with community college and vocational/technical schools to ease transition of Corp members through the admission and enrollment process.

A more aggressive or targeted approach should be used to raise AmeriCorps \*Vista's visibility on college campuses.

AmeriCorps \*Vista should develop partnerships with the Peace Corps recruiting to offer Vista an alternative to the many candidates Peace Corps cannot accept.

Increase recruitment in historically Black colleges.

Finally, recruitment is a multidimensional process and when it has been poorly conceived, the resources that have been utilized in the efforts have been wasted. This study clearly indicates that there is a need to enhance both recruitment and diversity of the Corps within the state of Florida. Brochures, posters, advertisement and other means of publicity play a crucial role in generating interest. However, creative and diversified



strategies must be employed if we are to meet the goals proposed in project applications, and those outlined by President Clinton.

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## Corps Member Survey

The corporation of National Service is supporting a research project to identify problems and to develop strategies relating to the recruitment of AmeriCorps members. Your assistance by completing this survey is greatly appreciated.

*Please mark the box corresponding to the most appropriate response.*

1. What is your sex?

Female	<input type="checkbox"/>
Male	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. How do you describe yourself?

Caucasian or White	<input type="checkbox"/>
American Indian or Native American	<input type="checkbox"/>
Asian, Pacific Islander or Filipino	<input type="checkbox"/>
Black or African American	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hispanic, Chicano, or Spanish-Speaking American	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (Describe: _____)	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. How old are you?

Under 18	<input type="checkbox"/>
18 to 22	<input type="checkbox"/>
23 to 25	<input type="checkbox"/>
26 to 30	<input type="checkbox"/>
31 to 40	<input type="checkbox"/>
41 to 50	<input type="checkbox"/>
51 to 60	<input type="checkbox"/>
61 years or more	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. Are you currently married?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. Do you feel that you have a permanent handicap or disability?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

6. As an individual with a disability, have you encountered barriers to accessibility?

Yes	
No	

7. Have you previously enrolled in any postsecondary educational institution? If you have enrolled in more than one, please mark the most recent.

No, I have not been enrolled.	
Yes, at a two-year college.	
Yes, at a four year college or university	
Yes, at graduate school	
Yes, at a vocational/technical school, trade school or business school.	

8. Where did you learn of the AmeriCorps Program?

High school counselor	
Media (Publications)	
Program Recruiter	
Friend or Colleague	
Other (Describe: )	

9. *The following is a list of reasons or motivations expressed by some for their participation in AmeriCorps. For each item, please check the appropriate response to indicate the importance of each reason in motivating you to participate.*

<i>Please mark one of the following.</i>	<b>Very Important</b>	<b>Somewhat Important</b>	<b>Not at all important</b>
• Beliefs, convictions or principles			
• Career exploration preparation/ advancement			
• Interest in civic affairs			
• Education award			
• Sense of Social Responsibility			
• Commitment to protecting the rights and welfare of			

others			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interest in understanding people with backgrounds different from my own</li> </ul>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Other (Please Describe)</li> </ul>			

10. What recruitment strategies would you recommend that may have made your participation in AmeriCorps more attractive?

11. What recruitment strategies would you recommend that may attract a more diverse Corps?

## Directors/Coordinators Survey

The corporation of National Service is supporting a research project to identify problems and to develop strategies relating to the recruitment of AmeriCorps members. Your assistance by completing this survey is greatly appreciated.

1. Should the AmeriCorps,Vista applications (RFP) emphasize recruitment as a major goal requiring an action plan as part of the proposal?

Yes	
No	

2. Did you discuss recruitment in you orientation/training session?

Yes	
No	

If yes:

Very Little	
Extensively	

3. Identify three challenges your have encountered in the recruitment of AmeriCorps members?

4. What strategies do you recommend to respond to these challenges?

5. What strategies do you recommend to attract a more diverse corps?

6. What strategies do you recommend to recruit persons with disabilities?

## High School Survey

The Corporation for National Service is supporting a research project to identify problems and develop strategies relating to the recruitment of AmeriCorps members. Your assistance by completing this survey is greatly appreciated.

1. What is your sex?

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male

2. How do you describe yourself?

- ☐ Caucasian or White
- ☐ American Indian or Native American
- ☐ Asian, Pacific Islander or Filipino
- ☐ Black or African American
- ☐ Hispanic, Chicano, Puerto Rican, or Spanish-Speaking American
- ☐ Other (Please specify \_\_\_\_\_)

3. How old are you?

\_\_\_\_\_ years

4. Do you feel that you have a permanent handicap or disability?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

4.a. If yes, Does your disability require an accommodation?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

5. Do you plan to enroll in a post-secondary educational institution (i.e. beyond high school)?

- ☐ Yes, at a 2 year Community/Junior College
- ☐ Yes, at a 4 year College/University
- ☐ Yes, at a Vocational/Technical School, Trade School, or Business School
- ☐ No

5.a. Will some kind of financial aid be required to attend a post-secondary educational institution (i.e. beyond high school)?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

6. Have you ever heard of AmeriCorps?



- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No (If no, skip questions 6.a. and 6.b.)

6.a. If yes, Where did you hear about AmeriCorps (Please check all that apply)?

- ☐ High School Counselor/Teacher
- ☐ Media (TV, Radio, Publications)
- ☐ Friend
- ☐ Internet
- ☐ Other (Please specify \_\_\_\_\_)

6.b. Are you aware that participation in AmeriCorp provides an educational award and a monetary stipend?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

AmeriCorp provides the opportunity to provide service to communities throughout the United States. Participation in AmeriCorp provides a maximum educational award of \$9450 for 2 years of service in AmeriCorp. Participants also receive a monetary stipend of \$327.70 twice a month in addition to the educational award.

7. Knowing of the educational award, would you consider AmeriCorp as a viable option prior to attending a post-secondary educational institution?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Do not plan to attend a post-secondary educational institution